

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Leaders of the Bucharest Nine (B-9) Group of North Atlantic Treaty Organization Eastern Flank Nations in Warsaw, Poland
February 22, 2023**

[The President's remarks were preceded by remarks from President Andrzej Duda of Poland, President Klaus Iohannis of Romania, and President Zuzana Caputová of Slovakia, for which no transcript was provided. President Biden then spoke as follows.]

President Biden. Well, thank you all very much. And I'm delighted to be here.

As some of you may remember, years ago, when we were expanding NATO, I was the one in the United States Senate who was pushing the hardest to expand NATO for membership of many of you sitting around this table.

And the irony is that one of the last conversations I had with the—our friend in Russia was, I said: "You keep asking for the Finlandization of NATO. You're going to get the NATOization of Finland." Well, it happened. Not only are we strong as we were, we're stronger.

And I say to my fellow Presidents that I'm honored to be with you here—and so many strong NATO allies—and the Secretary General, who I think has done an incredible job—an incredible job—for a long time, and I rely on his judgment a great deal.

You know, the B-9 was founded in 2015, after Russia attempted annexation of Crimea. And today, as we approach the 1-year anniversary of Russia's further invasion, it's even more important that we continue to stand together. And I think this is proof of this, how strongly we feel.

That's why I wanted to meet all of you in person here today. As NATO's eastern flank, you're the frontlines of our collective defense. And you know better than anyone what's at stake in this conflict not just for Ukraine, but for the freedom of democracies throughout Europe and around the world.

You know, when—that's what President Zelenskyy and I spoke about when I was in Kyiv 2 days ago.

And the leaders around this table have repeatedly stepped up to reaffirm our shared commitment to all these values. We've provided critical security assistance to Ukraine and critical support to literally millions of refugees. We've helped ensure Ukrainians can access basic services. And together, we'll continue our enduring support for Ukraine as they defend their freedom.

Over the past year, with your countries—with countries around this table providing collective leadership, we've also strengthened NATO. The commitment of the United States to NATO—and I've said it to you many times; I'll say it again—is absolutely clear. Article 5 is a sacred commitment the United States has made. We will defend literally every inch of NATO—every inch of NATO.

And it's—this is an important moment. And I look forward to the discussion and the next steps we can take together and—to keep our alliance strong and to further deter aggression.

Because what literally is at stake is not just Ukraine, it's freedom. The idea that over 100,000 forces would invade another country—after war—since World War II, nothing like that has happened. Things have changed radically. And we have to make sure we change them back.

So thank you all very much for allowing me to be with you. And I look forward to our private discussions.

President Duda. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And now I pass the floor to the NATO Secretary General, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg. Please.

[At this point, the meeting continued; no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in the Column Hall at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine. Also participating in the meeting were President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria, Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic, President Alar Karis of Estonia, President Katalin Novak of Hungary, President Egils Levits of Latvia, and President Gitanas Nausėda of Lithuania.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Bucharest Nine (B–9) group of North Atlantic Treaty Organization eastern flank nations, leaders.

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Names: Duda, Andrzej; Stoltenberg, Jens; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

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